

How Can We Be More Like Sweden? Open Space Session (10/2/08)

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Stephen gave us some background information on Sweden to “plant seeds” in our heads.

- Policy there starts at the federal government level.
- They start with the ends; then find the means to get there. They ask how to get there.
- Ends:
Sweden first came up with a list of 16 (environmental) goals – see Swedish EPA website
[Anna's note: I have added it here, for everyone's reference:
<http://www.naturvardsverket.se/en/In-English/Menu/Swedens-environmental-objectives--for-a-sustainable-society/Swedens-environmental-objectives/The-system-of-environmental-objectives/The-national-environmental-objectives/>].
 1. Climate Change
 2. Livable Structures
 - etc.
- Means to end:
 - Business structure
 - Policies: Example – carbon tax
 - Steer municipal grants toward sustainable infrastructure
 - Consider regulations requiring all vehicle fuelling stations to include at least one alternative fuel, such as ethanol, biogas (natural gas from organic waste), or biodiesel
 - Encourage research into more sustainable biofuels, such as ethanol from cellulose
 - Education of the public concerning the value of reducing waste
 - Price waste in a way which encourages diversion, e.g. separating organic waste at source
 - Expand "Extended Producer Responsibility" regulations requiring producers to take responsibilities for their products and packaging throughout the life cycle

Our discussion

Where do we start? If just CA, which agencies should be involved?

Maybe we should start at local level, not even at the State level. Things will happen more quickly.
If start with the Feds, for example, it would take a long time.

Start with grass-roots.

The city who accomplishes this will serve as a role model, will motivate others to do the same.

Much discussion on the differences between U.S. and Sweden and between U.S. and other developed countries.

For example:

- Environmentalism – more of a core value among the Swedish population.
- The biggest environmental NGO is included at the table in Sweden in writing environmental laws.
- Coming up with a national list of environmental objectives such as Sweden's – might be hard here at the federal level, considering such factors as the changing Administration every 4 years, etc. Could this be done at the state or municipal level however?

New ways of thinking:

Helping the homeless vs helping the environment – first seemed like these objectives were at odds with one another. But by recovering value from waste, we can help the environment, and a new company producing alternative energy could create new jobs. For example, Gothenburg Energy, the municipal energy company in Gothenburg Sweden, employs 1,000 people who operate and maintain the alternative energy infrastructure (waste heat recovery, electricity and heat from municipal waste, district heating loops, and so on). This approach can also create revenues for a city, which could be applied to helping the homeless too. So maybe these objectives are not at odds.

Building code – some municipalities require dual piping for recycled water use. What about requiring heating from recycled streams?

Sacramento – could do this. Very feasible to require that gas from wastewater treatment plants be used to fuel buses, thus establishing a closed loop. The key is to show it's a cost saving to cities/counties.

Integrated planning. If community energy plans, liquid and solid waste management plans, greenhouse gas reduction plans, regional growth strategies, and transportation plans are developed in concert, then the overall results will be better for the environment and for society.

Questions by Community Planners. Planners must be encouraged to move away from questions such as "What's the cheapest option for disposing of waste?" and toward questions like "What options for waste will result in the greatest environmental, social, and economic good?"

Suggestion: change name of CIW(Waste)MB to CIR(Resources)MB.

Kip will be meeting with incoming Senate leadership to discuss, among other things, how integrated the CIWMB is.

We could celebrate the breakthroughs, for example, communities which recover value from waste and so create employment, reduce costs to taxpayers, and reduce pollution and greenhouse gases (for example the biogas initiative in the East Bay Municipal Utility District).

Action Items:

Come up with goals (just like Sweden's list of 16 goals), then codify it. [No one volunteered for this

task.]

Question was asked: would this list be useful? Do you foresee anything happening as a result of this list? [No answers.]

Stephen suggests: See The Natural Step Story: Seeding a Quiet Revolution, by Karl-Henrik Robèrt, and The Natural Step for Communities: How Cities and Towns can Change to Sustainable Practices, by Sarah James and Torbjørn Lahti.